

Determinants of Motivationally-Anchored Ghanaian Rural Classrooms

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the factors responsible for the high rate of school attendance among rural pupils in Ghana in recent times. Questionnaire were used to collect data from a sample of 274 rural primary school pupils. The chi-square test of independence was used as the major analytical tool. The results of the study indicated that Ghanaian rural pupils are in school not because school is going to benefit them as individuals in future, but because of such external factors (extrinsic motivation) as the capitation grant, school feeding programme, and the supply of free school uniforms. Implications of this trend for stakeholders have been drawn.

Keywords: Extrinsic motivation; School Attendance; School feeding programme.

Introduction

Under the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as adopted by the UN, Ghana is to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015 (ISODEC, 2007). UPE means all children enrolled in class one must necessarily complete class six after a six year period without dropping out. The New Education Reforms however, focus on Universal Basic Completion (UBC) rate by 2015. This means, instead of achieving only a universal primary education, Ghana now has to achieve a universal basic education completion; that is both primary and junior secondary school education, by 2015 as per the new reforms. These targets, ISODEC says, are more ambitious and far exceed the standards required under International Conventions on people's rights, including the MDGs to which Ghana has subscribed.

To be able to meet these rather ambitious and far-reaching targets however, government has come up with sharper interventions in some major policy areas, i.e. policies on enhancing access such as the Capitation Grant, the abolition of levies such as extra class fees, administrative levies, construction and rehabilitation of Basic Schools, the school feeding programme. According to the Public Agenda (May 12, 2006), these interventions have by any measure, impacted positively in the education sector in recent years. It further says that reports that have come from the communities that have benefited from these interventions,

talk more positively about children enrolling in schools because of the schools feeding programme and the capitation grant.

On Tuesday May 9, 2007, when addressing a stakeholders' forum of the 2007 Global Action Month, Mr. Sam Akoto Danso a principal Planning Officer and Special Assistant to the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, disclosed that statistics indicate that enrolment into basic schools has gone up by a 17% point from 3.7 million to a record of 4.3million. He claimed that the increase in school attendance has been so high that it has become difficult for the authorities to provide the required number of teachers for the classrooms. He said that the high enrolment rate has left a deficit of 17,000 teachers, mostly for the rural areas; an admission that rural classrooms are recording high attendance.

A classic case of the rural connection to high school attendance rate, according to Danso (2007) is the Zuabuluga District Area Primary School in the Upper East region where one teacher now teaches over 214 pupils. Similarly, at the Ahomahoma District Area Primary School in the Ashanti Region and the Nkronua District Area Primary School in the Central Region one teacher handles 193 and 192 pupils respectively.

Further evidence of increase in rural school enrolment in recent years is presented by the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) which reported that "In general, good progress was made towards increasing access to education and narrowing gender gaps". The Capitation grant for all basic schools after successful pilot in 2004, had already demonstrated that the abolition of school levies has an immediate and substantial impact on enrolment" (UNGEI, 2006).

Djangmah, Avoke and Akyeampong (2006) also supported the high enrolment in basic schools, when they said that "some special schemes which have expanded education substantially through policies of no fees in basic education, and free supply of uniforms have been initiated to increase access in rural areas".

This sharp increase in rural basic schools notwithstanding, reports have it that some rural areas are rather witnessing a steady decline in school attendance rate. Gyan-Orhin (2007) reported that Lawra-Zomb and Wa Township in the upper West Region and Azinsum-Sumbrungu and Zongo in the upper East Region as well as Bugliga in the Northern region point to a denial of pupils' educational right.

To her, this is in spite of seven years in the Education for All (EFA) Campaign and with the introduction of the capitation grant and the school feeding programme. Majority of the pupils interviewed were orphans or girls and many came from very poor families. "These educational interventions mean very little to them", she concluded.

Despite lauding government for the high rural school enrolment rate Danso-Akoto (at the same forum) regretted that enrolment in some rural schools was also abysmally low. He

said the Nakolo District Area Primary in the Upper East Region has only seven pupils being taught by a teacher. In the Ashanti Region, the Abrakaso District Area Primary has a teacher teaching only one pupil while the Ariyesu District Area Primary in the Central region has one teacher to only four pupils; and the Agbetotsekpo District Area Primary in the Greater Accra Region has one teacher teaching only seven pupils.

The foregoing raises two major questions. Do boys and girls in the rural schools equally respond to these high attendance rates? The other question is; is the high rural basic school enrolment in recent years a function of the external motivators through government policies or a factor of the pupils' own self motivation? The purpose of this paper therefore, is to seek an answer to this research question.

Hypothesis:

The following null hypothesis was formulated to guide this study.

Theoretical Background

Several theories explain what motivate individuals to exhibit the behavioural patterns characteristic of them both outside and inside the classroom. Two of such theories are cognitive and Maslow's Hierarchy theories of motivation. These theories offer the theoretical basis of this paper.

Cognitive theory of motivation draws a key distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation causes us to participate in an activity for our own enjoyment, rather than for any tangible reward that it will bring us. In contrast, extrinsic motivation causes us to do something for tangible reward.

According to research on the two types of motivation, we are more apt to persevere, work harder, and produce work of higher quality when motivation for a task is intrinsic rather than extrinsic (Harackiewicz and Elliot, 1993; Ryan and Deci, 1996; Elliot and Harackiewicz, 1996). Such research suggests the importance of promoting intrinsic motivation and indicates that providing extrinsic rewards (or even just calling attention to them) may actually undermine the effort and quality of performance.

Maslow's model consider different motivational needs to be ordered in a hierarchy, and it suggests that before more sophisticated, higher-order needs can be met, certain primary needs must be satisfied (Maslow, 1970, 1981). The last part of this theory – when a person strives for the highest level need, self actualization – is the one most relevant to this paper. Self actualization is a state of self fulfillment in which people realize their potential in their own unique way. A parent with excellent nurturing skills who raises a family, a teacher who year after year creates an environment that maximizes students' opportunities for success, an artist who realizes her creative potential and a pupil who realizes the need to stay in school so as to build his or her own future might all be self-actualized.

Maslow's model is important for two reasons: it highlights the complexity of human needs, and it emphasizes that until more basic biological needs are met, people will be relatively unconcerned with higher order needs.

Literature Review

The literature on rural classroom motivation does present certain variables, which appear to be connected to, or are predictive of the drive that makes Ghanaian rural pupils remain in the classroom. Factors such as school leaders and school structures; school feeding programmes, capitation grant scheme; teacher personality and characteristics; have been found to collate positively with school motivation (Djangmah, Avoke, and Akyeampong, 2006).

School Structures and School Leaders

School structures sometimes perpetuate feedings and low self-worth and low levels of motivation among students. "Teachers and Parents worry that students are unmotivated". Raffini (1988) as cited in Renchler (1992) says "in reality, they are highly motivated to protect their sense of worth. He suggests using individual goal-setting structures, outcome-based instruction and evaluation, attribution retraining, and co-operative learning activities, to redirect student behavior away from failure-avoiding activities in academic settings.

Several other researchers have concluded that current school instructional practices sometimes hinder the development of motivation. Representatives of these researchers are Stipek (1988) and Eccles, Midgeley, and Alder (1984). Stipek makes a strong case for strengthening the degree of intrinsic motivation feel for learning. While she does not argue for the complete elimination of extrinsic reward system, she believes that "there are many benefits to maximising intrinsic motivation and ways to foster it".

Eccles, Midgeley, and Alder argue that motivation would increase if students were asked by school authority to assume "greater autonomy and control over their lives and learning" as they proceed through all school grades and levels. This means that if school structures provide the enabling environment, students will be motivated to remain in school.

The work of Leithwood and Montgomery (1984) is especially helpful in the understanding of the connections between a school administrators' motivation and the level of motivation that exists among students.

According to Leithwood and Montgomery, school administrators progress through a series of stages as they become more effective. At their highest level of effectiveness, they come to understand that "people are normally motivated to engage in behaviours which they believe will contribute to goal achievement. They concluded that personal motivation on the part of the principal can translate into motivation among students through the functioning of goals.

Maehr (1991) says school administrators can take advantage of times of educational changes by including strategies for increasing student motivation. Maehr continues that a positive “psychological environment” strongly influences student motivation; and school leaders can create this type of environment by establishing policies and programmes towards this direction.

An environment that nurtures educational motivation can be cultivated in the home, in the classroom, or throughout an entire school. One of the most effective avenues for engendering student motivation is a school’s culture. According to Deal (1987), school culture can be embodied and transformed through channels such as shared values, heroes, rituals, ceremonies, stories and cultural networks.

Davis (1989) suggests using a wide variety of activities and symbols to communicate motivational goals. “Visible Symbols” he says, “illustrate and confirm what is considered to be important in the school”. He suggests using “School Newsletters, statements of goals, behaviour codes, rituals, symbols, and legends” to “convey messages of what the school really values”. Staging academic assemblies, awarding trophies for academic success and displaying them in trophy cases, scheduling motivational speakers, and publicizing students’ success can help them see that the desire to be successful academically is recognised and appreciated.

Klug (1989) notes that school leaders can influence levels of motivation by “shaping the school’s instructional climate” which in turn shapes “the attitudes of teachers, pupils, parents, and the community at large toward education”. By effectively managing this aspect of a school’s culture, principals can “increase both student and teacher motivation and indirectly impact learning gains”, Klug says.

School Feeding Programme

One other factor that is believed to have contributed to rural school retention and regular classroom attendance is the school feeding programme. According to a USAID/Ghana and the Catholic Relief Service report of 2000, the school feeding programme benefits children in the primary schools (average 6-12) as well as those at the pre-school level, and these kids are drawn to school in droves. Each child in a programme school is entitled to lunch a day and the girls who are able to make a monthly attendance of 85% or more are given take home ration.

According to the report the northern part of Ghana which has the lowest school enrolment (Gross Enrolment Ratio: 65% in 1998) and attendance rates of pupils of school going age in the country is however enjoying a steady growth in attendance and enrolment rates following the introduction of the programme in the three northern regions (GLSS, 1998 & 2000).

WFP’s school feeding formula says food attracts hungry children to school and this broadens their options, helping to lift them out of poverty. WFP further says the formula has seen big

successes in Afghanistan, Cape Verde, Cote d'voire, Ecuador, Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sudan, and Zambia (WFP, 2007).

According to the 1996 – 2007, ILO (Disclaimer) the school feeding programme in the Gambia has enhanced regular attendance and retention of lower Basic School children through providing launch.

Capitation Grant

The introduction of the Capitation Grant (where all school levies have been abolished) at the basic schools has gone a long way to motivate pupils in the rural schools to remain in the classroom.

According to Akoto Danso (2007) the introduction of the capitation grant has increased school enrolment by a 17% point from 3.7million to a record of 4.3million.

At the official website of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (Friday 22nd June, 2007), the capitation grant scheme has led to substantial increase in enrolment numbers across public schools in the country.

Whereas the increase in gross enrolment ratios over the past few years has been an average of 3% preliminary figures received from the districts recorded the following estimated results: 2004/2005: 2005/2006 increase

Level	2004/2005	2005/2006	Increase Rate
Pre School	25.5	30.80	5.3
Primary	83.30	92.70	9.4
JSS	70.20	76.10	5.90

UNGEI (2007) says the introduction of the capitation grant in Ghana has led to high enrolment rates and removed one of the main barriers of access (poverty) and narrowed the gender gaps. Particularly, in the kindergarten education, enrolment went up from almost 500,000 pupils in 2004/2005 to more than 800,000 in 2005/2006, an increase of 67%. In the same period primary enrolment increased from 59.1% to 68.8%, while net enrolment at the junior secondary level increased from 31.6 percent to 41.6%. This trend, according to the report, is observed in the poorest and remote areas, confirming that the abolishment of school fees benefits the rural poor pupils.

Teacher Characteristics and Personality

Researchers have drawn a link between school attendance and teacher personality and characteristics. Berliner (1994) and Shulman (1987) reported that two teacher characteristics – teacher experience and understanding of subject matter – have proved to be powerful variables influencing how teachers understand the dynamics of the classroom and thereby help sustain the interest of their pupils in both school and classroom.

To them veteran teachers are able to use their experience to interpret the complex events that occur in classrooms and to make the split second decisions that are needed everyday. Teachers' attitude and beliefs have powerful impact on their ability to motivate their students and promote learning (Calderhead, 1996; Good and Brophy, 1997). These attitudes are often demonstrated subtly, but their positive influence on motivation is clear.

Bruning, Shraw and Ronning (1999) say high efficacy teachers increase motivation to learn more than do low – efficacy teachers. Low-efficacy teachers “write off” low achievers and criticize students to a greater extent than do their high-efficacy counterparts (Kagan, 1992). High efficacy teachers also tend to be flexible, more willing to try new curriculum materials and strategies to keep their classroom numerical strengths high (Poole, Okefor and Sloan, 1989).

Teachers strongly motivate their students through their modeling (Good and Brophy, 2000). Bryan and Welbeck (1970) claim if teachers are inconsistent in what they say and do children tend to be more discouraged rather than stay in class. Teachers who present information enthusiastically increase motivation, self-confidence, learning and achievement more than do less enthusiastic teachers (Perry, 1985; Perry, Magnuson, Paronson and Dickens, 1986).

Methodology

The Sample

Data for the study was collected from a non-probability sample of 274 pupils from one primary school each in the Wa District (Upper West Region), Garu Tempane District (Upper East Region) Asuanfo District (Brong Ahafo Region), Ashanti-Akim North District (Ashanti Region), Agona District (Central Region).

The sample, which was a non-random one, was reached via snowball and purposive sampling procedures.

Instrument

A twenty four item questionnaire made up of a spread of items depicting intrinsic factors of school motivation and items showing extrinsic factors of school motivation. The instrument was derived from the literature. A correlation coefficient of 0.89 was obtained when the Cromback's alpha was used to test the instrument's reliability.

Administration

The questionnaire were distributed to the respondents personally and through four trained

assistants who were all teacher trainees of the University of Education, Winneba. All questionnaire were returned through same and received in person.

Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis was first done to determine the gender distribution of the high rural school attendance as a way of answering the first research question. The next step was to answer the other research question. The last part of the analysis was to test the hypothesis.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Regions and Districts

Region	District												
		Boys	Girls	Total	%	Boys	Girls	Total	%	Boys	Girls	Total	%
Upper West	Wa	9	10	19	6.9	10	11	21	7.7	6	9	15	5.4
Upper East	Garu Tempane	11	10	21	7.7	7	9	16	5.8	6	12	18	6.6
Brong Ahafo	Asunafo	5	13	18	6.6	8	13	21	7.7	8	9	17	6.2
Ashanti	Ashanti Akim North	11	11	22	8.0	8	11	19	6.9	9	8	17	6.2
Central	Agona	8	10	18	6.6	12	9	21	7.7	4	7	11	4.0
Total		44	54	98	35.8	45	53	98	35.8	33	45	78	28.4

The Table 1 above shows that of the 55 respondents from the Upper West 24 of them, representing 43.6% were boys while 54 the remaining 31 (i.e. 56.4%) were 53 girls. As regards the Upper East the same figures of 24 (43.6%) and 31 (56.4%) were boys and girls respectively. The trend did not differ in the Brong Ahafo region. Twenty one of the respondents representing 37% and 35 (62.5%) were boys and girls respectively. In the Ashanti region 28 of the respondents were boys. This number was 48.3% of the respondents while 30 pupils representing 51/7% were girls.

The Central region had 24 representing 48% of the respondents being boys while 26 (i.e. 52%) were girls. The results in the table clearly show that the females were those in school the more. The boys were 122 (or 44.5%) as against 152 (or 55.5%) girls.

This observation confirms what UNFEI says in the literature: “the introduction of the intervention by government through the capitation grant and the school feeding programme has narrowed the gender gaps in basic school. The figures in the distribution are also consistent with the research findings by Gyan-Orhin. She observed that most of the pupils found in the rural settlements and interviewed were girls many of whom came from very poor families. This means, since the girls were always available to be reached they were the ones who would benefit most from these interventions. The boys who were not in school might have followed their fathers to their occupations – either to the farm or to

tender cattle or sheep. The answer to the research one is that the female pupils in the rural schools are more than their male counterparts.

Table 2: Intrinsic Motivational Factors

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Strongly Disagree	4	68.5	-64.5
Disagree	182	68.5	113.5
Agree	87	68.5	18.5
Strongly Agree	1	68.5	-67.5
Total	274		

Looking at the results (see Table 2) majority of the pupils (67.9%) either disagree or strongly disagree that they are motivated by intrinsic factors to go to school. Therefore they go to school not because of intrinsic factors.

Another test was conducted to find out whether the respondents go to school because of extrinsic factors. This was done as a way of answering the research question by verifying whether if they are not motivated by intrinsic factors then they are motivated by extrinsic factors.

Table 3: Extrinsic Motivational Factors

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Strongly Disagree	2	68.5	-66.5
Disagree	23	68.5	-45.5
Agree	172	68.5	103.5
Strongly Agree	77	68.5	8.5
Total	274		

From table 3 above the majority of the respondents (90.9%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they are motivated by extrinsic factors to go to school. The answer to the second research question therefore is that Ghanaian rural children are in school because of external motivational factors and not because of the intrinsic value of schooling.

H_0 : “there is no significant difference across the categories”; The expectation here was that the number of responses for the categories would be the same – meaning respondents do not have any strong opinion about the factors motivating them to go to school.

The test results present significant outcomes. $X^2(3, N=274) = 252.29, P < 0.05$ meaning that the respondents have an opinion on the issue. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Summary and Conclusion

The results of this study have revealed that many Ghanaian rural school pupils are in school not because they are convinced that they are going to school to benefit from it in future. Rural pupils are in the classroom because of the external influences from parents, teachers and the state. The study further revealed that Ghanaian rural children were generally happy to remain in school so long as interventions like the capitation grant and the school feeding programme keep coming from the state. Furthermore, the results reveal an interesting dimension to rural school attendance. That is, there are more girls in rural classrooms than boys

The results are inconsistent with earlier research by the cognitivists that, people are more apt to persevere, work harder and produce work of higher quality when motivation for a task is intrinsic rather than extrinsic. However, the results show consistency with Maslow’s motivation model that says people can only work to the optimum when basic physiological needs like food and shelter are met first.

Finally, the results of the study have some implication for stakeholders in rural pupils’ education. Pupils must be encouraged to see the need to go to school rather than induced to go to school, so as to avoid the probability for pupils to drop out when external motivational elements cease forthwith. Also conscious efforts must be made to encourage high school attendance rates among rural boys. This could be done in the same fashion of educating the public to send their boy children to school.

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